

THE CONVERSION
OF WINCKELMANN
ALFRED AUSTIN



Austin

P. o. angl.
19eb

THE
CONVERSION OF WINCKELMANN
AND OTHER POEMS



THE CONVERSION OF
WINCKELMANN

AND OTHER POEMS

BY

ALFRED AUSTIN

POET LAUREATE

SECOND EDITION

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED

NEW YORK: THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1897

All rights reserved



CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE CONVERSION OF WINCKELMANN	I
A SOULLESS SINGER	58
TO IRELAND	62
VIS MEDICATRIX NATURAE	72
ANOTHER SPRING CAROL	73
WHO WOULD NOT DIE FOR ENGLAND !	80
SORROW'S IMPORTUNITY	88
A REPLY TO A PESSIMIST	90
HOW FLORENCE RINGS HER BELLS	100
A DREAM OF ENGLAND	105
JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS	107
A POINT OF HONOUR	111
A FLORILEGIUM	123
IN PRAISE OF ENGLAND	129
BURNS'S STATUE AT IRVINE	133
AN EXPERIMENT IN TRANSLATION	137
THE SILENT MUSE	148
A PORTRAIT	157



THE CONVERSION OF WINCKELMANN

I

“SHOW me some other way, and I’ll not do it !

“One sudden, solitary, sterile lie,
With no false brood to follow, haply born
Of feebleness, surprise, forbearing fear
Lest the hard fact should hurt, were base enough;—
Too base for me, who, ever since my tongue
Was fledged with language, straight unto the mark
Sent sharp words flying, careless whom they hit,
If friend or foe, and, least of all, myself.
And now !

B

“Nay, if it be the last time to be brave,
And slink a tortuous coward ever more,
Look this colossal lie full in the face !
It is not sudden, solitary, barren,
Feeble, surprised, a gift to tenderness,
But a deliberate, procreative lie,
Teeming with perjured progeny, swarm on swarm
Of profitable falsehood, each fresh fraud
Begetting a new litter : lie on lie,
With lies, and ever yet more lies to follow,
A labyrinth of lying ! . . . Winckelmann !
Stand you upon the solid earth, or float
Along some vague fantastic atmosphere,
Unbounded, unconditioned, where there rules
Nor truth, nor falsehood, only vaporous dreams
Submissive to the will and the desire ?
No ! Truth is truth, or here or elsewhere,

And at the Universe's furthest frontier
God still must post his sentinels to challenge
Apostasy of soul ! Infinity
Hems in the conscience !

“ Yet the alternative !

“ Here to remain, and die ! Day after day,
Week after week, year following upon year,
Hopeless of better or of worse, and doomed
With clowns and clods, triflers and dolts, to
share

The same reiterated nothingness !
To live as dead, and manacled to the dead,
Who, since not coffined, deem themselves alive !
Oneself to be alive, and yet not live !
Be sensible of freedom, yet a slave !

When but one word, did I but utter it,
 Would lift me from this darkness, and transport
 To Italy and light !

“ He waits within,
 Ready to take profession of my Faith,
 That I believe whatever Rome believes,
 Say what Rome says, and do what Rome enjoins.
 | There’s but that door ’twixt me and happiness.
 Achinto, suave and smooth, with vowelled voice
 Soft as his Southern tongue, all *sì* and smiles,
 And stooping grace, befitting one whose height
 Makes bending necessary, natural,
 And condescension part of dignity ;
 From brow to buckle, just the Cardinal.
 | He waves aside one’s scruples with a hand
 As white as is a woman’s, and a shrug

So definitely doubtful, one can scarce
Say if it pleads for faith or scepticism.
Haply for both, as though he fain would mean,
Without the hazard of the spoken word,
'Why boggle at one mystery more or less?
Think long enough, and all is mystery,
Think longer still, and everything is doubt.
Why not the sage solution, "I believe,
Because it is impossible," and thus
Profess your faith, and still retain your doubts?
Will disbelieving solve the mystery
More than believing, think you? Any way,
Believe, and here's your passport straight for
Rome,
With ducats for the journey, and a home
In Passionei's Library, then all
The Gods of Greece and Art of Italy,

6 *THE CONVERSION OF WINCKELMANN*

Your dream arrayed in daylight ! Disbelieve,
And here you stagnate until life ebbs out,
The lettered lackey of unlettered lords,
Drudge for mere meat and drink. Rome holds
 the keys
Of both the Christian and the Pagan world.
Speak ! She will open either.'

“League after league of undulating sand,
With nothing in its furrows, fallow still
Through season after season, save when brimmed
With the unsprouting snow, and in the mist
Some stunted growth huddling round brackish
 pools,
The landmarks of unloveliness that prop
A leaden sky, the sun's sarcophagus.
If but brute matter were thus blind and dumb !

But here men's souls are sterile as the soil,
Kindred to niggard Nature, stunted, starved,
Monotonous, forgotten of the Gods,
Disdained, and disinherited. And I,
Imprisoned in their narrowness, am paid
A scullion's wage for cataloguing books
Not worth the binding ; fantasies of saints
Or genealogies of fools from fools,
A meaningless procession !

“ And to think,
As I sit shivering here, body and soul,
And all around as dismal as my doubts,
Are silvery fountains flashing in the sun
Of Rome's blue spaciousness ! tall crystal columns,
Self-buoyed and self-replenished, that upbear
Lightly a wind-webbed water-woven dome,

A fairy fretwork falling unimpaired
Into white marble basins, curved and cool
As the clear wave from chilly Samnite source
That brims and laves them ! Thitherward there
 wend

Majestic matrons with columnar throats,
And brazen pitchers cushioned on the coils
Of ebon tresses ; Caryatides
Throbbing and warm, Olympus in their gaze,
Born of the she-wolf and the Sabine rape,
With bosoms moulded by the mother milk,
Lips like the split pomegranate pulp, and teeth
White as the tusks of the Hernician boar
Snarling at huntsman's spear ; round, sinewy limbs,
Supple as strong, and flexible alike
To love or hate, and passion-purpled blood
Quick to ferment, and then with thunderous brow

To flash the dagger from their hair and drive
Its point implacable into the heart
Of wayward lust ! not like the haggard herds
I daily see around me, cringing, cowed,
With foolish flaxen hair and empty eyes,
Serfs suited to such masters !

“ Thus, without.

Within, in courtly corridors that lead
Onward to halls of pure white spaciousness,
On their pentelic pedestals the Gods,
Throned on imperishable marble, stand,
Abstract of power and passion purified
By dominance of beauty, their aloft
Unwrinkled foreheads rapt in starlike calm,
Rebuking man's perplexity ! Pagan gods
Robed in majestic nakedness, adored

By Christian Pontiffs ; 'mid remorseful Saints,
 Radiant and unrepentant in their joy :
 Gods, demigods, and heroes, pliant nymphs
 In grasp of sinewy satyrs, goddesses,
 Flowered from the brine, or fruited in the brain,
 Winsome or wise, for pleasure or for power,
 Teeming divinities ! all there ! there ! there !
 In universal Rome !

“ There, yes ! but reft
 Of half their godhead by ungodlike man,
 Careless, confusing, with disordered mind
 Confounding Jove with Bacchus, Faun with Pan,
 Antinoüs with Hermes, labelling
 Sarcophagus a puteal, at loss,
 From lack of proper study, to discern
 A bust of days Republican from head

Done in the sunset of the Antonines,
Or Caryatid from Canephora.
Why, think but of that frieze they lately found
In musty wine-shop by the Latin Gate,
Discoloured by long drippings from the vat
It served for prop, and chipped by scullions' feet
Staggering about in search of withied flasks
Bellied with liquor to the very throat.
They say 'tis Argive Capaneus scaling Thebes,
Full on the topmost ladder lightning-hit,
Shrivelling to fall. 'Tis Agamemnon, plain,
Adulterously murdered in his home,
War-lord in vain for an unworthy wife,
The wanton of Aegistheus. If it were
Capaneus, where the chlamys, helmet, spear,
And forward strain of battle on his face?
This man unarmed is that confiding thing,

A husband unaware. Were I but there,
I could convict them quick, would set aright
Their jumble of Olympus, single out
Original from copy, old from new,
Splendid from spurious,—I, and I alone !
Since, though from actual vision still shut out
Of those self-speaking images, I have
On text and indication bent and pored,
Until their inmost soul from outward garb
I know, as one a tree from bark or leaf,
And name them, never seen. Can one believe,
If I were by, that Cavaceppi should,
As now his wont is, chip a feature off,
Then clap it on again, to make-believe
The head's antique when but the body's so ?
They're quick and subtle, these Italians,
But triflers somewhat.

“ Yet, if that were all,
'Twere much, but little matched with more and
worse :

Statues like Morning, slumbering undisturbed
In mud of Tiber, slime of centuries,
And offal of oblivion ; toppled down
From Senate-house and Temple, from the seats
Of their serene supremacy dislodged ;
Lowered from their dignity divine, since now
Saviours of Rome no more, and grossly hurled
On head of Vandal, Visigoth, and Hun,
A futile sacrilege ! their deathless forms
Buried alive, with none to disinter,
In excrement of ages, breathing still
In subterranean refuges : Rapine, rage
Of multitudinous war, with wave on wave
Of tawny inundation, have entombed

Their monumental effigies, withal
Embalmed in still forgetfulness, and now
Quick to come forth, to slough their sleep, and dawn
Once more upon our sight ! I know the spot,—
How often have I crept to it in my sleep !—
Midway the vineyard of the Convent propped
On southern shoulder of the Aventine,
Where, give me shovel and pick, and let me delve,
And I will such a Juno disenshroud,
As, seen, will straight repaganise mankind,
Bring the swoon premature of Pan to end,
Send Hamadryads wantoning through the wood,
And with the wand of her clear loveliness
Rejuvenate Olympus ! Now She sleeps
In alabaster stillness, bedded deep
In loamy rubble, rambling olive roots
Knotted about the dimples of her knees.

The newly-feeling fibres of the vine
Fantastically filigree the curve
Of her creased neck, and, thence meandering down
Through the deep valley of her sloping breasts,
Veil the chaste portal of her matron womb.
The iron rust of many-wintered rain
And sodden soil hath brimmed with seeming gold
The fine-drawn furrows of her rippling hair,
And, mindful of her rights, with golden crown
Crested her brow.

Gods ! let me go to her !

Achinto ! I am coming !

“ If He knew,

My austere Sire ! How plain I see him now !
His hand and eye intent upon his task,
His heart with God : but Luther's God, not Rome's !

Too straight and simple to do aught but deem
His humble handicraft the highest Art,
If finished faithfully. To cobble shoes,
And be an honest man, or lie, and live
A dainty dilettante, which is best,
Which noblest, worthiest? My dear Mother, too!
What would she say? my Mother with a gaze
Ever as though she just had come from prayer,
Though housewife never blither; and she deemed
That Rome is Antichrist. O, how they drudged,
Day in day out, and far into the night,
That I might be a scholar. Yes—but whose?
Not Jove's, but—'Mother! anything but that!
I am not fit to preach the word of God.'
So they forbore, and I have laboured on,
Mellowing my mind, but still, still harvestless,
Till now, now, now! when Rome exclaims "'Tis ripe,'

And puts the fruitful sickle in my hand.

Both long are dead and resting in their graves,

In dreary Stendhal with its grass-grown ways,

Where everything's forgotten, and the wind

Wails over sand and unremembered bones.

They will not know.

“ But if they should ! and if

There be, as they believed, a second life,

A world where cobblers are as wise as kings,

And haply higher seated, whence they scan

Our nether doings with unclouded eyes :

A Heaven, as they conceived it, denizen'd

Not by lascivious Ganymedes, but thronged

With saints and martyrs ? Martyrs !—that's the
point.

I was not made for martyrdom ; and yet,

I think that I could bear the tight stiff stake,
The sudden blaze, the suffocating smoke,
The fiendish fire, one's entrails all a hell,
And every nerve a demon, but at most
Just for one maddening minute, then no more,
Rather than palter with the truth ; but not
This long, slow, sullen, endless martyrdom
Of a whole life, the martyrdom of mind,
Which with the torture grows more sensitive,
Nor perishes of the pain. I cannot bear it !
Meek souls, how should they know ? 'Twas kind
of Nature

With feignings of the Future thus to lull
The living ache, and cozen them till death
Reveals not the deception ! But that I
Should of a doubtful promise be the dupe,
Bide in a prison with an open door !

Out on the thought ! One life, if only one,
Thus willed, thus wasted, when no fabled Heaven,
But Rome,—Olympus, Paradise, in one,—
In this clear world awaits me !

“ But the price ?

I had forgot the price. The Greek sage said,
‘ The Gods to men sell all things at a price,’
And the divinities of Papal Rome
Drive a hard bargain. They demand my soul,
Or what they call such, better named my Self,
My conscience, honour, fealty to truth,
The very mark and manhood of my mind.
What an exchange ! Will nothing less suffice
them ?

I must believe the unbelievable,
Or piously asseverate I do.

They, with dissimulation not content,
Claim simulation also.

“Never to be an honest man again !
To creep to Lauds and Vespers at the heel
Of punctual Monsignori, portly, sleek,
Too princely to be sceptical, then kneel
And keep a sidelong glance lest any watch
To see one does one’s praying properly ;
To make pretence to pray, to patter psalms,
With face convinced ; to swell my throat and join
In canticles by eunuch voices shrilled,
The unmanlier I ! to clasp my breviary,
And wend with suitable and solemn gait
To Mass, ‘ Impostor ! ’ hissing in my ears :
Dip finger in the holy-water stoup,
Then cross myself on forehead, breast, and lips,

To show I know the trick ; to genuflect
Just at the proper moment, proper place,
And do it very noticeably lest
Any should guess I burn to stand erect ;
Make daily mock of the Great Sacrifice,
And feign to deem it re-enacted there ;
To bow my head to—nothing ! when a bell
Tinkles, and, husht in incense, every sound
A moment is suspended !—Could I do it ?
To sleep, wake, walk, sit, kneel, rise, live, a liar !
Kissing cold relics, mumbling litanies
With sacristans and shavelings,—honest, they,
A perjurer, I ! Then, the Confessional !
With nothing to confess,—for truly I
Am not adulterer, murderer, backbiter,
And any day as lief eat fish as flesh,—
And so, 'tis plain, with nothing to confess

Save the one sin I never *could* confess,
The sin of sins that overtops the rest,
And dwarfs them into virtues ! Comedy,
With still the mask on ! Peter's self could not
Absolve for such transgression.

[An attendant enters, addresses Winckelmann, and retires.]

“What did he say ?

‘His Eminence grows impatient.’ So do I.
Honour, dishonour, true, false, bitter, base,
Grow to a maddening medley in my brain.
Tell him I'm coming. Nuncio ! Confessor !
And you, attendant troop of acolytes,
Now hear me make profession of my Faith !
There's nothing under Heaven I won't believe.
I'd sooner be a priest of Cybele,
Than bide imbruted here !

II

ROME

THE VILLA ALBANI

“HAD I but known, I might have spared my
scruples.

The dreaming mind makes nightmares for itself
In broadest daylight, and mine well-nigh choked
Just before waking. What fantastic fears !
Jove on the Capitol is templed still,
Mars on his mount, and Venus everywhere.
Unabdicating Gods, they take their seats
Within the very shrines my fancy filled
With gaze of keen inquisitors to watch

My thoughts, and if I verily believed.
This clear-eyed, big-brained, pagan Papacy
Is much too busy contemplating gems,
And turning blurred intaglios to the light,
To spare the time for canonising saints,
Or worrying sinners : just the Rome for me,
And I the very man for such a Rome.
This flowing mantle, this black velvet robe,
These snow-white bands, are pleasant to the limbs,
The eye, the touch, and do, I think, become me.
But if my kith in Stendhal were to deem
That I am an Abate, save my cloak,
They would but show their Northern simpleness.

“In what a goodly company I sit !
There, Jupiter, with Empire on his brow,
But calm in self-held counsel, undisturbed

By purposes participated, or
The gusty misdirection of the crowd.
There, Hermes, not yet dwarfed to Mercury,
Winged at the head and sandalled at the heel,
Heaven's messenger alert, whose stolen strings,
Stretched deftly o'er the sluggish tortoise' shell,
Make instant music : Virgin Artemis,
Kept chaste by action and the brisk embrace
Of Morning, bright and chilly as her spear,
Her bare feet diamonded with meadow dew,
And twin-leashed boarhounds baying at her side,
Beating Arcadian covert : all the Gods
Radiant around me ! No Madonnas here,
Contorted martyrs, scranny confessors,
To wean composure from the breast of joy.
And not alone the deathless denizens
Of Hades and Olympus drink the light

Of these cool corridors, but mortal men,
Almost as godlike as the gods themselves
By marble will and majesty of mind,—
The Macedonian with his manly tears
At frontier of ambition ; Hannibal
Unvanquished by his victors, 'spite defeat
Foremost of those who tread the ways of war ;
The Samian Sage, the vulgar travesty,
Who made himself a garden, and enjoined,
No carnal epicure, the goal of man
Is still felicity, but that the road
Lies along cleanly and imperial ways,
Not swinish by-paths ; Homer, with his gaze
Surveying all, and therefore fixed on none,
The Poet outside all things, he alone,
The Reconciler, with his concords twain,
Song and ensuing Silence ;—all are here,

Indulgent of my presence, claiming me
Their servitor, if faithful then their friend,
Their equal, by their grace and courtesy.
Such will I strive to be, but not to-day,
When, look ! upon the fountain's marble rim
Rounding the plashing music, April doves,
Just like to Pliny's in the Capitol,
Sip and glance sideways, flutter, perch again,
And preen their purple feathers in the sun,
Ausonian sun that fills the chalices
Of tulip and anemone with light
Mellower than Montefiascone's wine.
Along the coping of the stuccoed wall
See Juno's pompous sentinels parade
The jewels of their self-supporting train.
Stirred by the very faintest breath that scarce
Would rob the roundness of the thistledown,

Flutters the olive, and with upturned leaves
Silters the golden sunlight. At the tips
Of the pruned vine-stems glisten drops of dew,
The promise of their shortly dawning shoots.
Hark ! 'twas the hoopoe ! heralding the bird
Who talks to Spring of nothing but himself,
So likewise half an egoist, as is meet,
Apeing his betters, but imperfectly.
To fig-tree bole the green frog clings and croaks,
And the lithe lizard squats along the wall,
Fagged by its very restlessness, and takes
Siesta in the sunshine, not the shade.
Taught by the almond how to bloom, the peach
Hath bettered now the lesson, and the pear,
Forgoing useless rivalry, arrays
Itself in whiteness. Every ruined wall
Breaks into blossom, every shattered arch

Its wrinkled baldness now festoons with flowers,
To join the Saturnalia of the Spring.
I hear the cask-piled wine-carts creaking slow
O'er the Nomentan Way, hear them, but see not,
Save with the sight responsive to the sound,
In sweet confusion of the senses made
Kindred. There is no iris now in Heaven,
But, finding Earth yet heavenlier, it hath dropped
In coils and jewelled fragments to the ground,
And wavers over the Campagna wide.
Days are there, like to this one, when 'tis well
To lie supine in popped vacancy,
And, passionlessly passive, to conceive
Those hovering intimations that alight
On the lulled sense, impregnating the brain
With embryonic fancies that mature
In season unto shapeliness and fruit.

And so to-day I claim from Gods and men,
 And my loved Alessandro, a forenoon
 Of brooding lethargy,—to bask and purr
 Over my fixed felicity.

“All is nought,
 All lived and loved elsewhere, when matched with
 Rome.

I deemed myself a student amply armed
 With bookish preparation, and that here
 I should but see the treasures I surmised.
 The veriest catechumen, I have passed,
 With Passionei, Giacomelli, Mengs,
 Corsini, and Cantucci, most of all
 With Cardinal Albani, step by step,
 Into Art's inmost mysteries, and now,
 I live their equal, I the cobbler's son,

Spurned in the insolent and servile North,
Where all are clowns together. When I wake,
My princely Master—Master, but because
I love to call him so,—doth mount and sit
Familiar in my chamber, to discuss
The missing limbs of torso late unearthed
By some unlettered spade, and bids me choose
To-morrow's excavation, just as though
I were the Cardinal, and he the clerk
To register my wish. What men are these !
He but the first, the rest so like to him
In loveliness and largeness of their lives,
And speculations spacious as the dome
That copes the Roman ether, and as free
From matters' cloudy superfluities.
The titled boors of Brandenburg that scorned
My learning as my lineage, use their gold,

Lords of unlovely luxury, to scoop
Their swine-troughs deeper, grossly surfeiting
Their nether nature. Prince and Cardinal,
Whose veins are channels for the far-off blood
Of Alba or Lanuvium, consume
Their substance, as themselves, in marble Heavens
For Gods to haunt, and all mankind to scan,
Diviner for the seeing. Never here
Is homage to the menial body paid.
The mind alone is guest. No cushioned comfort
Distracts from limbs of beauty, brows of thought,
Nor is the ostentatious banquet spread,
Circean. 'Tis the soul alone that feasts ;
Unclouded by the cup.

“ But let none think

The nimble spirit's sportiveness is numbed

By Art's solemnity. On festal nights,
Hither my splendid Cardinal convenes
All the renown and jewelled grace of Rome
To glisten through his Villa. Nymph and Faun,
Persistent types, in modern modes disguised,
Consort with their progenitors embalmed
In unvoluptuous marble cold and calm.
They dance before our gravity, and wit
Sparkles like alabaster. Clement's self
Hath with his presence sanctified the scene,
Retiring scandalised, or seeming so
To save his holiness, nor stayed to hear
Battoni's lovely daughters, voice with voice,
Like two waves wantoning to be one, awhile
Eluding each the other, near, apart,
Till merged at length in one smooth melody.

.
.

“Gods ! what a feast was yesterday ! Behold
What, ’twixt the noon and evening Angelus,
We quarried in a vineyard near the Arch
Of Gallienus. No cold copy, that !
But so authentic from Hellenic hands,
That Phidias’ self, or sure some touch like his,
Ere Attic genius strained beyond the point
Of absolute perfection, and so lost
Its even balance, might have chiselled it.
See ! the young Knight this very moment hath
Sprung from his steed, that, lightened of the load,
And biassed by the bridle leftways clutched,
Rears foaming into air with incurved hoofs,
Nostrils dilated, terror-shaken mane,
Ruffling the marble. Gazing from the ground

At imminence of death, the fallen foe,
Entangled in his chlamys, lifts his arm,
Shield insufficient 'gainst the upward blade,
Flashing to fall. And with what slight effects
The chisel tells its tale ! The tightened lips
Bespeak the victor's purpose, and the mouth,
Half open with the coming cry of fear,
The victim's fate. How little ! yet enough.
Bernini, Buonarroti's bastard son,
Might learn his trade, if copyists e'er could learn,
By gazing on its simpleness. Pure Greek,
No Roman replica. Behind the head
Of the astonished steed, the background, see,
Is deeply hollowed out, that we may feel
The fulness of its terror, yet no line
Project beyond the marble's proper plane.
Where shall we find it fitting company ?

The very place ! 'Twill feel at home between
Antinoüs crested with the lotus-flower,
And the bronze statue by Praxiteles,
The lizard-slaying Musagete. No hand
Must maim its splendour, mending it. The mind,
And not manipulation, can supply
What Time hath taken. Let it keep its loss,
Like yon divine sarcophagus that weds
Peleus with Thetis, the fair Seasons four
Tricked in their emblematic imagery,
Hephaestus proffering the well-tempered sword,
Pallas her spear, and tender Hesperus
With sloping torch leading the way to love,
That falters on the threshold of its joy.

.
.

“ O for one morning on the Acropolis !

With Salamis afront me, and, around,
The steeds of Hyperion, and the dark
Unplunging coursers of deliberate Night
Pacing the marble pediment unheard ;
Recalcitrant Centaurs bridled by their manes
By Lapithae implacable, and Fate
With granite gaze watching the things foretold.
And then the long procession, gods and men,
Panathenaic, toward the Temple reared
By the imperishable race that chose
Wisdom for their Divinity, and, thus
Initiated, found in faultless form,
Or wrought or sung from mundane formlessness,
The secret of serenity. Virile Rome,
Intent on warfare till the world was won,
Gave ageing Hellas hospitality,
Guest not ungrateful. But the hasty hours

I spent at Paestum and Parthenope,
Have made me live so that I must not die
Till I have seen the violet sunset fade
Along the friezes of the Parthenon.

“Let me be just to Rome, even the Rome
Of the Tiara and the Fisher’s Ring,
Tonsured and surpliced. The Hellenic mind
Moulded to its conception matter and spirit,
Marble and even thought, discarding all
That clouds consummate harmony, aware
Art is rejection. Comprehensive Rome
Shaped concord from all discords, and, when worlds
Fell to its sword, made Roman citizens
Of their strange gods. And so it is to-day,
Here where imperial piety confounds
Venus with Virgin, Saturn with Saint John,

Persephone with Agnes, and adores
Jove in Jehovah ! Though I can but kneel
To the unnamed Divinity that haunts
No human shrine, but hovers in the air
With wings unseen, a vision not a voice,
Rome hath rebuked my northern narrowness :
And now with sympathetic gaze I watch
The brown-skinned peasant fingering her beads
Before the oil-lit shrine ; the hurrying nun
Deep-cloistered in her wimple ; mobile maid,
Her face alight with undefined desire,
Of patron Saint enamoured till he send
An earthly lover ; aye, and sandalled monks
Mumbling their Aves, so they do but love
What they recite ; flowers, candles, incense, all
That brings to lowly and laborious hearts
Comfort and tenderness. Rome understands.

At Seehaus I in church one day was shamed,
A Homer being my Hymn-Book. Rightly read,
Rome's Ritual is a poem, so I need
No missal more humane ; and hence it lasts.
Withal, at times, my fingers fondly turn
The pages of the Lutheran book of prayer
My mother gave me ; for the parent Past,
Of all things the most potent, still enfolds
Its far-off children.

“ Sometimes I wonder if these Cardinals,
These Monsignori with minds full as free,
Heaven save the mark ! as mine, are anchored fast
To their deep dogmas. Giacomelli spits
The Anti-Jansenists on pious pen,
And then unto his pagan library,—
No better Hellenist than he,—and shakes

His cassock, reading Aristophanes ;
While Passionei with Voltaire corresponds,
And gives his poems to Pope Benedict.
His library he calls his wife, and laughs,
'Behold no jealous husband ! Take, enjoy,
And then return !' Among the Alban hills,
Now in a flowery dressing-gown, and now
Booted and spurred, he stalks about his grounds,
All things discussing, and with strident voice
Outscreams the peacocks, with a hat more like
A contadino's than a Cardinal's.
From under dear Albani's purple peeps
The Colonel of Pontifical Dragoons ;
A soldier yet at heart, real soldier once
Before his Uncle, Clement, grasped the keys,
And then, of course, his Eminence ; but still
Prepared to die,—for what ? For Art ? Or, 'chance,

For Countess Cheroffini :—best of men,
Most loving and most lavish ; yet at prayer,
Mass, Matins, Vespers, Lauds, punctilious
As mid-day cannon of Sant' Angelo ;
And did you doubt the difference between
Contrition and Attrition, would be shocked
At such a lack of breeding.

“ Every day,
One hour before along the city sounds
Ave Maria from the Capitol,
I in his coach escort my Cardinal
To the fair Countess : fair by courtesy,
Since fair she was, uncertain years ago,
When Alessandro in his virile prime
Clanked sword and spur, and every breast in Rome
Heaved at his coming ! Chuckling gossips add,

‘One daughter is his double.’ On that theme
The babbler, love, is as discreet as death,
The cradle reticent as is the grave ;
So whether friend or lover, *Chi lo sà ?*
Believe which way you will. Who is it, says,
‘Short-memored lust and long-remembering love’?
And he remembers : honour him for that.
He never empty-handed climbs her stair,
But either gem, antique intaglio,
Etruscan lamp or tazza, to her feet—
Belike it minds him of the bygone years
When he was not sole giver, and consoles
For grizzled embers,—tenders gallantly,
And she rejects not ; for the Countess hath
That foible of the facile, graceful greed,
And thus the villa slowly strips of much
My faithfulness begrudges. True, to give

Is proof of nobleness, and only churls
Feel richer by refusing. But he gives,
She grasps, too heedlessly ; and so, when asked
How to repair his gaping treasury,
I answered laughingly, ' Your Eminence,
But burn the Cheroffini Palace down
And all within it, or alive or dead,
You shall be rich as Sallust.'

“ Truly strange,

This fetter of the flesh, that maketh bond
Pontiff and bumpkin, clown and Emperor.
Love,—yes of father, mother, country, friend,
And most, of Art,—*that* I can understand.
But when they merrymake o'er Mengs's wife,—
He first descrying her, wise man, exclaimed,
' Behold the very model that I want

For my Madonnas !'—and reproach me, 'See !
How Margherita smiles upon you !' Pheugh !
How little do they know me ! Love, like Art,
Should live established in serenity ;
A classic love, immortal because calm,
Not like the riotous imaginings
Of our Romantics, sprawling shapelessly
In perishable passion. Let me live
With fleshless forms voluptuously cold
In unexacting marble. But, to Greece !
Their sepulchres are there, and, at a stroke,
Ready to rend their cerements !

.
.

“ At last ! the Camerlengo doth accept
Visconti for my vicar while I sail
For Sunium, and along the unfathomed soil

Of Elis, Phocis, Attica, I sound
For submerged treasures. If not sooner, blame
The inconsiderate gods, who send us here
So ill-provided! First, to Brandenburg.
Homesickness drives me thither, for the heart
Is biassed in the womb, and yearneth back
Toward the mother-land, grown greater now
That Frederick steals what others stole before,
Tracing his kingdom's boundary with his sword,
And, not unmindful of that wider realm
All sceptres can annex, would have me share,
If scantily, his thalers, so I bide
A minion at his Court. Impossible.
But half the offer and all my liberty
Haply I shall secure. Vienna too,
Where the male Empress and Prince Kaunitz

A gem as shrewdly as a protocol,
Perchance will plump my purse:—Then, then, to
Greece !

But Romeward still returning. After Rome,
Florence itself were exile !

“ Ere I go,
Let me once more, untended, wander where
'Mid prostrate columns, splintered capitals,
The buffaloes in Sabine wine-carts crouch,
Dreamily blinking, while their shaggy guides
Drowse by the shafts, imperial pedestal
The mid-day pillow of their peasant sleep.
Where Caesar strode to triumph, bearded goats
Browse on the myrtle of the Palatine,
And all the sepulchred centuries lie around,
Tumbled in tombs, without an epitaph !

What was Evander's, Caesar's then, is now
Evander's yet once more ; and if again
Aeneas left the Latian shore to search
For crib of future Rule, he still would find
The white sow's farrow nosing fallen mast,
The Tiber tawnily twisting past the sedge,
Straw-wattled walls and wolfish wilderness.
It is the Past that, from its crumbling tomb
Unswathing lethal bandages, hath stretched
Its shadowy sceptre o'er the vanished sway
Of Tribune and Triumvirate, and crowned
The seven-hilled desolation with the spell
Of its own quietude. The Past is peace.
Elsewhere let that confused amalgam, Man,
Battle and wrangle ; here he broods and prays,
Ready to go where Rome hath gone before,
Down to the dust of ages.

“It is well

I hence should go awhile. Achinto tripped
In hurrying up Saint Peter's stair, and passed
Was by Rezzonico, whereby I missed
A Pope for patron. Though Albani buys
As ardently as ever, buys and builds,
The brightest torch burns itself out at last,
And, if that light were once extinguish'd,
What darkness would be mine ! How great he is
Who knows, till death shall focus him aright ?
In life he is too near. But worst of all
Is Mengs's treachery. Yes, Art is well ;
But how about the artist ? There it stands,
Writ plainly in my History ; and now,
The Ganymede embraced by Jupiter
I lauded as antique, is Mengs's own !
Out on these painted canvasses wherethrough .

Deception filters ! Marble doth not lie :

You cannot forge the Gods. Olympia !

Athens ! and Delphi ! In your fallen fanes,

They bide untravestied !

III

TRIESTE

[Lying on a couch, mortally wounded.]

“NOT broken on the wheel! For what? Why, then,
Where is the rack for *me*? He did no worse
Than I have done these twenty years, and I
Have had those years: he's empty-handed still.
Give him the gem: no, not the gem; that must
Go to Albani, but with strict command,
A dying man's, he do not part with it
To Countess Cheroffini. Not the gem.
Give him my gold, with Clement's head on it,

Mere modern dross, that yet will carry him
To Grecian shores, where there lies rusted gold
Richer than rubies. He hath an eye, 'tis sure,
For hand of Hellas, otherwise he ne'er
Had plunged his knife so deep into my breast
When I withheld the gem. I clung to it
As though salvation hung upon my grasp,
And so I die a martyr,—after all !
But to which Heaven? Olympus? Paradise?
That now seems not so clear as once it did.
In lengthening days of Lent, a hirsute monk,
Who fasted all the year, would come from out
His frozen cell on topmost Apennine,
To drag us Christian Sybarites along
The Stations of the Cross that sanctify
The Flavian Amphitheatre, and fright
Our sunny souls with talk of mists of Death.

There is no mist upon Death's mirror now,
Wherein I see my life reflected clear,
Blurred and refracted hitherto. By what?
By love of Beauty? That can hardly be;
For Beauty is the soul of all things good.
Which Beauty, though? Is there, then, more
than one?

I know my father was an honest man.
He would not call *me* so; and honesty
Is Beauty after all. I grow confused.
But do not put Arcangeli on the wheel.
Had he for lucre roped me by the neck,
You should have broken him on a thousand racks.
But 'twas the carven wonder made him ply
The murderous noose. I almost think he might,
With study, wax to be a connoisseur
Expert as I; and few there are who could:

And there are herma, meta, puteal,
By hundreds, waiting their interpreter.
Whose deed was darker, think you, his or mine,
If dark be either? Instantaneous,—
The artist's native impulse, the strong hands,
Lured by the fascination of the gem,—
Was his quick act. Mine was deliberate,
Cold, calculated, the reward assured
And long enjoyed,—to be enjoyed no more!
It now had been all one had I remained
Still torpid in my drear integrity,
And never basked in the insidious South,
That undermines the conscience, where one learns
Art for Art's sake, and finds scant room for Virtue.

[A Capuchin Friar, with an Attendant, enters.]

How well I know that habit! Am I, then,
In Rome once more? Could you not carry me

Under the colonnade that I may see
Alban and Sabine mountains yet again,
Fold after fold of smoothly sloping hill,
Dimpled with dingles flashing to the sea ;
Bare-headed Monte Cavo's learned brow,
Rocca di Papa black above the woods
Where I have gathered snowdrops in the Spring,
And philosophic Tusculum? I think
That I should be more happy in my grave,
If Roman sunshine-shadow stretched athwart it.
What said you? He has come to shrive my sins.
Is then a Roman passport needed there,
Whither I travel? Oft have I confessed,
But never told the dark confessional
My sole transgression. Can you guess it, now?
What! Margherita Guazzi? Foolish Mengs,
And may-be foolish wife! But well I know,—

What I have never made men understand,—
To apprehend the glory and disdain
Of that Pure Form which dwells within the mind,
We should, like swallows, only skim the ground,
Then soar into the ether. I have loved
Chaste marble in cool corridors. If that
Be sin, it is my only one, and I
Can scarce repent of it. And now 'tis plain
I never shall commit that sin again.
If so there be another, even now
I cannot tell it you! You are very kind,
And so is the Madonna, and the Saints.
But if you'll read to me from out the book
My mother gave me when I was a boy
In the Old Mark, I think I should prefer it.
They are wrong, tell dear Albani, when they deem
'Tis Aegeus showing unto Aethra where

In Troizene are hid the shoes and sword
For Theseus to unearth, when his limp thews
Are strained to manhood. It is Theseus' self,
The huge rock rolled away ; and thus he takes
Leave of his mother, bound for Attica.
When am I going thither? Ganymede !
Lift me aloft, that I may banquet where
They chant the music of Cecilia !
Beauty is everywhere ! ”

[He dies.

ATTENDANT

How still he looks !

CAPUCHIN

The homing soul goes quiet on the wing
Unto its nest in Heaven !

A SOULLESS SINGER

I

HAIL ! throstle, by thy ringing voice descried,
Not by the wanderings of the tuneless wing !
Now once again where forked boughs divide,
Lost in green leafage thou dost perch and sing :
Trilling, shrilling, far and wide,
“ It is Spring.”

II

Thy matins peal long ere the rosy dawn
Unfolds its hull and burgeons into light ;
Nor cease thy vespers till from darkling lawn
The silent shadows steal away in flight,
And the star-lit tent is drawn
Round the Night.

III

Is it in Heaven, or mid-way of the Earth,
Thou learn'st to outvoice, outnumber all the
Nine?

What is the secret of thy madcap mirth?
Wilt thou not tell it me, and make it mine?
What is all my singing worth,
Matched with thine?

IV

If heedless mortals only understood
What the prerogatives of real renown,
Hearing thee warble in umbrageous wood,
Or in the dingles of the rolling down,
It is thou, not I, that should
Wear the Crown.

V

And yet perchance more deep and more divine
The insufficiency of my poor strain.
One single solitary note is thine :
Weak though they haply be, yet I have twain.
Joy is all thy song ; of mine
Half is pain.

VI

Thou with thy carol flatterest the Year
But when it frolics into happy bloom :
Only those notes hast thou, wild chanticleer,
That with their thoughtlessness can banish gloom
From its cradle ; I, a tear
For its tomb.

VII

Thou with the blossom and bud and baby leaf,
Heartless of woe, dost revel and rejoice,
But for sere sorrow and the pensive sheaf
Lackest, for all thy minstrelsy, the voice :
There are seasons when sweet grief
Is our choice.

VIII

So, throstle, be the very voice of Spring,
And bring back rapture to the wrinkled bole !
Of all life's chords joy is the leading string,
And happiness is much, but not the whole.
Leave it then to me to sing
To the soul !

TO IRELAND

I

“ WHAT ails you, Sister Erin, that your face
Is, like your mountains, still bedewed with tears ?
As though some ancient sorrow or disgrace,
Some unforgettable wrong from far-off years,
Done to your name or wreaked upon your race,
Broods in your heart and shadows all your mind ;
So that no change of Season, nor the voice
Of hopeful Time, who bids the sad rejoice,
Can lift your gloom, but you, to kind unkind,
Keep moaning with the wave, and wailing with the
wind.

II

“Come let us sit upon yon cliff, we twain,
Whence we may gaze across your soft green Isle,
Girt by the strong immeasurable main,
That, see ! looks up, and sweetens to a smile ;
And you shall talk to me of all your pain,
Through deep blue eyes and dark unbraided tresses
Hooded by wimple that your own hands weaved
When you and Winter last together grieved,
While far beneath our feet the fast foam presses
Round bluff, and creek, and bay, and seabird-sung-
to nesses.”

III

Then half withholding, yielding half, her gaze,
She smoothed her kirtle under her, and clasped
Her hands about her knees, as one who prays,

Watching the clambering billows as they grasped
At slippery rocks where wild-goats may not graze,
Then fell back foiled, shivered to spray and smoke.
And I could see the warm blood of her race
Crimson beneath her weather-beaten face :
As though her heart would break, her voice would
choke,
In accents harsh with hate, and brimmed with sobs,
she spoke.

IV

“ They came across the sea with greed of spoil,
And drove me hither and thither from fen to foam,
Reaving and burning, till the blackened soil
Waxed bitter-barren as the brine they clomb,
Sterile to seed and thankless unto toil.
Harried and hunted, fleeing through the land,

I hid among the caves, the woods, the hills,
Where the mist curdles and the blind gust shrills,
Suckling my hate and sharpening my brand,
My heart against their heart, my hand against their
hand.

V

“ And ever as I fled, they ever pursued.
They drove away my cattle and my flocks,
And left me, me a Mother ! to claw for food
'Mong ocean-boulders and the brackish rocks
Where sea-hogs wallow and gorged cormorants
brood ;
Unroofed my hut, set the sere thatch aflame,
Scattered my hearth-fire to the wintry air,
Made what was bare before stretch yet more bare,
I waxing wilder more they strove to tame,
To force and guile alike implacably the same.

F

VI

“They would not suffer me to weep or pray:
Upon the altar of my Saints they trod;
They banned my Faith, they took my Heaven away,
And tried to rob me of my very God!
And, when I sued them leave me where I lay,
And get them hence, still, still they would not go.
They reft the spindle from my famished hands,
My kith and kin they drove to other lands,
Widowed and orphaned me! And now you know
Why all my face is wet, and all my voice is woe!”

VII

I crept a little nearer, and I laid
My hand on hers, and fondled it with mine;
And, “Listen, dear Sister Erin,” soft I said,
“Not to the moaning of the salt-sea brine,

Nor to the melancholy crooning made
By thoughts attuned to Sorrow's ancient song,
But to the music of a mellower day.
Forgive ! Forget ! lest harsher lips should say,
Like your turf fire, your rancour smoulders long.
Now let Oblivion strew Time's ashes o'er this wrong.

VIII

“ The robber bands that filled the Isle with groans
Were long since clamped and prisoned in their
 graves :

The flesh hath dried and shrivelled from their bones,
Their wild war-standards rotted from their staves ;
Their name is nought. 'Tis thus that Time atones
For all the griefs man fastens on his kind.
The days were dire, his passions swift and fell :

His very Heaven was but a sterner Hell.

His love was thralldom, hatred black and blind,
As headstrong as the wave, as wayward as the
wind.

IX

“Nor did alone you suffer. You too dealt
Full many a stroke, too fierce to be subdued
Till you had made the fangs of vengeance felt.
Mercy and truce you spurned, and fed the
feud

Of Celt with Saxon, Saxon against Celt,
Till lust enforced whatever law forbade.
Nay ! do not linger on that painful dream,
But turn and smile ! as when a silvery gleam
Dimples your loughs that whilom seemed so sad,
And runs along the wave, and glistens and is glad !

X

“We own our fault the greater, so we now
For balance of that wrong would make amends.
Lift the low wimple from your clouded brow,
Give me your gaze, and say that we are friends ;
And be your mountains witness of that vow,
Your dewy dingles white with blossoming sloe,
Your tawny torrents tumbling to the sea :
For You are far the fairest of the Three,
And we can never, never, let you go,
Long as your warm heart beats, long as your bright
eyes glow.

XI

“The Triune Flag, none now save Tyrants dread,
That with Imperial peace protects the world,
Hath by the sinewy sons you bore and bred

Round the wide globe been carried and unfurled.
Where danger greatest, they it was who led,
And stormed death rather than be backward driven.
Now, gaze no more across the western main,
Whose barren furrows hope still ploughs in vain.
Turn Eastward, where, through clouds by sunrise
 riven,
England holds out her hand, and craves to be for-
 given.

XII

“Live your own life, but ever at our side !
Have your own Heaven, but blend your prayer
 with ours !
Remain your own fair self, to bridegroom bride,
Veiled in your mist and diamonded with showers,
We twain love-linked whom nothing can divide !

Look up ! From Slievemore's brow to Dingle's
shore,

From Inagh's lake to Innisfallen's Isle

And Garriffe's glen, the land is one green smile !

The dolphins gambol and the laverocks soar :

Lift up your heart and live, enthralled to grief no
more !”

DUGORT, ACHILL ISLAND,
August 1895.

VIS MEDICATRIX NATURAE

WHEN Faith turns false and Fancy grows unkind,
And Fortune, more from fickleness than spite,
Takes the keen savour out of all delight,
And of sweet pulp leaves only bitter rind,
Then I the load of living leave behind,
Fleeing where, far from human sound and sight,
Over brown furrows wheels the lapwing white,
And whistles tunely with the winter wind.
For Nature's frank indifference woundeth less
Than Man's feigned smiles and simulated tears :
She is at least the egoist she appears,
Scorning to proffer or entice caress ;
And, through the long reiterated years,
Endures her doom with uncomplainingness.

ANOTHER SPRING CAROL

I

Now Winter hath drifted
To bygone years,
And the sod is uplifted
By crocus spears ;
And out of the hive the bee wings humming,
And we know that the Spring, the Spring, is coming.

II

For the snow hath melted
From sunless cleft,
And the clouds that pelted
Slant sleet have left
The sky as blue as a child's gaze after
Its tears have vanished and veered to laughter.

III

See ! light is gleaming
In primrose brakes,
And out of its dreaming
The speedwell wakes,
And the tender tips of the timid clover
Peep forth to see if the frost be over.

IV

The celandine gazes
Straight at the sun ;
The starlike daisies
Peer one by one ;
And, over the pool where the sallow glistens,
The daffodil hangs its head and listens.

V

At first but single,
And then in flocks,
In dell and dingle
The lady-smocks
Make mist for the golden cowslip tapers
To shine like sunrise through morning vapours.

VI

In fat-ribbed fallows
The lapwings nest,
And the home-coming swallows
Seek out where best
They may build, with a love that is sure and stable,
Their cosy cribs under last year's gable.

VII

The blackcaps treble
A strain as sweet
As stream o'er pebble,
Or wind through wheat,
While, like flickering light, the kinglet hovers
Round woodbined haven of hiding lovers.

VIII

The lark chants, soaring
From moist brown heath,
'Twixt Heaven's high flooring
And earth beneath,
Like a true wise poet, in wavering weather,
A carol to link the twain together.

IX

The cuckoo, flaunting
O'er glen and glade,
Flies loudly vaunting
New loves betrayed,
Till we all of us echo the madcap saying,
And laugh, and joyously wend a'maying.

X

Then in mask and tabard
The mummer trips,
And out of its scabbard
The iris slips,
And calls to the lily and rose, "Why tarry,
Now the nightingale under the silence starry,

XI

“ Keeps trilling, trilling,
Its nest above,
The descant thrilling
Of straining love,
That yearneth for more—more—more,—till glad-
ness,
Still winged with wanting, seems one with sadness.”

XII

But once the roses
And lilies blow,
Our wilding posies
Follow the snow,
And, turning to greet the fair new comer,
We find the face of the fearless Summer.

XIII

But though sultry shimmer
And panting heat
Lure senses dimmer
To deem them sweet,
Who would not exchange their passionate thunder
For May's moist blushes of maiden wonder?

XIV

But Winter hath drifted
To bygone years,
And the sod is uplifted
By crocus spears ;
And out of the hive the bee wings humming,
And we know that the Spring is coming, coming !

WHO WOULD NOT DIE FOR
ENGLAND!

Whippingham—Sandringham, February 1896

Who would not die for England!

This great thought,

Through centuries of Glory handed down

By storied vault in monumental fane,

And homeless grave in lone barbaric lands,

Homeless but not forgotten, so can thrill

With its imperious call the hearts of men,

That suddenly from dwarf ignoble lives
They rise to heights of nobleness, and spurn
The languid couch of safety, to embrace
Duty and Death that evermore were twin.

“Who would not die for England!”

Thus He said,

Who at the holiest of all English hearths,
The holiest and the highest, had been given
A seat, an English Princess for his Bride,—
Now at that hearth weeping her widowed tears,
Bitter and barren as the winter rain.

“It is not meet that I, whom this famed Isle,
This generous, mighty, and majestic Land,
Ennobled as her son, should not repay
Her splendid gift of kinship. Let me go,
Go where they go, Her world-researching race,

That slumber pillowed on the half-drawn sword,
And wake at whisper of her will, to greet
Duty and Death that evermore were twin."

Who would not die for England !

And for Her

He dies, who, whether in the fateful fight,
Or in the marish jungle, where She bids,
Far from encircling fondness, far from kiss
Of clinging babes, hushes his human heart,
And, stern to every voice but Hers, obeys
Duty and Death that evermore were twin.

So across the far-off foam,
Bring him hither, bring him home,
Over avenues of wave,—
English ground,—to English grave ;

Where his soldier dust may rest,
England's Flag above his breast,
And, love-tended, long may bloom
English flowers about his tomb.

Who would not die for England, that can give
A sepulture like this, 'mid hamlet crofts,
And comely cottages with old-world flowers,
And rustic seats for labour-palsied limbs,
The pensioners of Peace! I linger here,
Pondering the dark inexplicable Night,
Here by this river-girt sequestered shrine
Whose vanished walls were reared anew by Him,
Of Princes the most princely, if it be
That Wisdom, Love, and Virtue more adorn
Sarcophagus of Kings than dripping spears,
Lone wailing hearths and hecatombs of slain.

And He too died for England, He who lived
 Scorning all joy save that great joy of all,
 The love of one true woman, She a Queen,
 Empress and Queen, yet not the more revered,
 Not the more loved, for those resounding names,
 Than for the lowlier titles, Gracious, Good,
 The Worthiest of Women ever crowned.

Sweetest Consort, sagest Prince !
 Snows on snows have melted since
 England lost you ;—late to learn
 Worth that never can return ;
 Learned to know you as you were,
 Known, till then, alone to Her !
 Luminous as sun at noon,
 Tender as the midnight moon,
 Steadfast as the steered-by star,

Wise as Time and Silence are :

Deaf to vain-belittling lie,

Deaf to gibing jealousy ;

Thinking only of the goal,

And, like every lofty soul,

Scanning with a far-off smile

The revilings of the vile.

Yes, He too died for England ! thence withdrawn

Dim to that undiscoverable land

Where our lost loved ones dwell with wistful eyes,

And lips that look but speak not. . . . But away !

Away from these soft-whispering waves that make

A dulcet dirge around the new-delved grave,

To bluff East-Anglia, where on wind-swept lawns

The sanguine crocus peeps from underground

To feel the sun and only finds the snow ;

And, whinnying on the norland blast, the surge
 Leaps against iron coast with iron hoof,
 As though the hosts of Denmark foamed afresh,
 Caparisoned for ravin ! And I see
 A cradle, not a coffin, and therein
 Another Child to England ; and, veiled Fate
 Over it bent with deep-divining gaze,
 And with oracular lips, like nurse inspired,
 Foretelling the fair Future.

“ Another Albert shalt Thou be, so known,
 So known, so honoured, and His name shall stand
 The sponsor to your spotlessness, until
 Dawns the full day when, conscious of your soul,
 Your soul, your self, and that high mission laid
 On all of such begetting, you may seize
 The sceptre of your will, and, thus-wise armed

Against the sirens of disloyal sense,
Like to your pure progenitor abide
In God's stern presence, and surrender never
That last prerogative of all your race,
To live and die for England!"

SORROW'S IMPORTUNITY

I

WHEN Sorrow first came wailing to my door,
April rehearsed the madrigal of May ;
And, as I ne'er had seen her face before,
I kept on singing, and she went her way.

II

When next came Sorrow, life was winged with scent
Of glistening laurel and full-blossoming bay :
I asked, but understood not, what she meant,
Offered her flowers, and she went her way.

III

When yet a third time Sorrow came, we met

In the ripe silence of an Autumn day :

I gave her fruit I had gathered, and she ate,

Then seemed to go unwillingly away.

IV

When last came Sorrow, around barn and byre

Wind-carven snow, the Year's white sepulchre,

lay.

"Come in," I said, "and warm you by the fire."

And there she sits, and never goes away.

A REPLY TO A PESSIMIST

I

O BEAUTIFUL bright world ! for ever young,
And now with Wisdom grafted on thy Spring,
Why do they slander thee with wailing tongue,
And lose the wealth of thy long harvesting ?
Why do they say that thou art old and sad,
When, each fresh April, nightingales are glad,
And, each returning May, paired misselthrushes
sing ?

II

“Stripped of our dreams” ! It is the sleeper
then,

And not the shadowy corridors of night,

Fair visions have deserted. Hill and glen

As haunted are with wonder and delight

As when Endymion felt his eyelids kissed

By the moist moon, and through the morning
mist

Foam - sandalled Venus flowered, immaculately
white.

III

“No deities in sky, or sun, or moon !

No nymphs in grove or hill, in sea or stream” !

Why, I saw Artemis, this very noon,

Slip through the wood, a momentary gleam,

As satin as the sallow and as lithe,
And heard her eager sleuth-hounds baying blithe
Hard on the intruder's heels, then rent Actaeon's
scream.

IV

"Dead"! Hamadryads frisk in every wood,
In every pool elusive Naiads dwell;
Neptune's dread voice, deep as when Troy still
stood,
Is stored for us in every murmuring shell.
List! you will hear. But look, and you will
find
Iris in rainbow, Hermes in the wind,
Delphi's inspiring fount in every wayside well.

V

“No God ! no Heaven ” ! The Gods you cannot
kill,
Nor banish from their seats the sainted choirs.
The deep-toned organ is Cecilia’s still,
Still lamb-like Agnes quencheth wanton fires ;
Stephen still sanctifies the martyr’s lot,
And many a maiden, though believing not,
Beholds Madonna’s face, then chastens her desires.

VI

O beautiful bright world ! for ever young,
With gifts for ever fresh. The seasons bring
All that they ever brought, since flowers first
sprung
To deck the blushing consciousness of Spring.

Summer still makes us glad that we were born,
Our musings mellow with the mellowing corn,
And to our fireside loves wise Winter bids us
cling.

VII

What is there we have lost while hearts still
beat,
While thought still burns? You cannot Man
dethrone,
Time's Heir-Apparent, from his sovran seat,
Assail his empire, or curtail its zone.
What though fledged Science fearlessly explore
New worlds of knowledge unsurmised of yore,
These fresh-found realms the Muse annexes to its
own.

VIII

Thus have we Eld's delights, our own as well :
Science is but Imagination's slave ;
Nor have "the antique fables" lost their spell,
Because we pierce the sky and plumb the wave.
For us the stars still sing, the moon still
 grieves,
The Fauns still rustle in the fallen leaves,
The Crucified is risen, and glorifies the grave.

IX

Is Love less sweet because men loved of yore ?
No, sweeter, stronger, with the ages' growth.
Love's long descent ennobles loving more,
And Helen's falsehood fortifies one's troth.

Bridging Time's stream with life's commanding
span,

We stand upon the Present, and we scan
Future and Past, and seem to live along them
both.

X

What have we lost?—we, who have gained so
much :

The mind of man, familiar afar,
Hath upon sun, star, planet, laid its touch,
Lassoed the lightning, yoked it to his car.
Yet fear not lest that Knowledge should deflower
The awe that veils the inviolable Power,
Or that we e'er shall learn what, whence, and why
we are.

XI

'Tis Mystery lends a meaning unto Life,
Never quite guessed ; and simple souls, mean-
while,
Find Paradise in mother, sister, wife,
The far one's faithfulness, the near one's smile.
So long as valour wins and beauty charms,
And lovers throb into each other's arms,
How can you rail at life, reproach it and revile ?

XII

“Woe, agony, despair” ! Woe, yes, there is,
Despair there need not be. Meek wisdom tries
To gain from grief an after-taste of bliss,
And sees a rainbow through its streaming eyes.

H



Nor, if I could, would I quite part with pain,

Lest pity die ;—a loss, and not a gain.

'Tis Pride alone despairs. Be humble, and be wise.

XIII

We bear no “burden of the bygone years.”

Their matter perishes, their soul survives,

Widening our hopes and narrowing our fears ;

Shedding a shadowy charm athwart our lives,

Guiding our gropings, steadying our feet,

Like to an aged nurse, that we may meet

The Future without dread, whatever rue arrives.

XIV

What if there were no Heaven? there is the Earth.

What if there were no goal? there is the race.

'Tis unfulfilled desire that staves off dearth,
Sustains the march and stimulates the pace.
Where is the "prodigal waste of myriad lives" ?
No life is wasted that loves, hopes, and strives,
And wears an eastward glow upon its fading face.

XV

O beautiful bright world ! Earth, Heaven, in
one,
I thank thee for thy gifts : the gift of birth,
The unbought bounty of air, sky, sea, sun,
Seed-time and shower, harvest and mellow mirth ;
For privilege to think, to feel, to strive ;
I thank thee for the boon of being alive,
For Glory's deathless dream, and Virtue's match-
less worth.

HOW FLORENCE RINGS HER BELLS

November 1494—April 1893

I

WITH shimmer of steel and blare of brass,
And Switzers marching with martial stride,
And cavaliers trampling brown the grass,
Came bow-legged Charles through the Apennine
pass,
With black Il Moro for traitor guide ;

II

And, passing by Pisa's ransomed towers,
He swept up stream over Arno's plain,
Where Florence garlands herself with flowers
From burgeoning vineyards and olive bowers,
And emerald furrows of sprouting grain ;

III

And, flying and flaunting his pennons proud,
Crossed her bridges with naked sword,
And sware he would flourish his trumpets loud
And bristle his spears, save her beauty bowed
Itself to his stirrup, and owned him lord.

IV

Then Savonarola's voice was heard
Swelling as Arno, storm-flushed, swells,

And, with threat for threat, and with gird for gird,
Capponi flashed back the famous word,

“Then blow your trumpets, we’ll ring our bells!”

V

And lo ! as he spake, into street and square

Streamed Florentine burghers in grim array :

Then Charles, and Sforza, and groom Beaucaire,

Scared by the city they deemed but fair,

Shouldered their pikes, and passed away.

VI

But now a Monarch more mighty far

Than ever from Gallic or Teuton throne

Swooped from the Alps upon wings of war,

Comes welcome as April and west winds are,

When Winter is over and mistral flown.

VII

The Fair City peacefully rings her bells,
Rings her bells, and the loving peal
In the lazuline ether ascends and swells,
Till hoary turrets and convent cells
Feel young once more as the young buds feel.

VIII

And iris gonfalons scale her walls,
And rustic roses storm square and street ;
In sound of her gates the cuckoo calls,
And the slow-swaying ox-wain creaks and crawls
'Twixt blossoming bean and beardless wheat.

IX

In gabled pathway and shaded porch
Men gather and wait to acclaim "The Queen" ;

While over the wall, where the sunrays scorch
And the lizard is lost, the silvery torch
Of the fig is tipped with a flame of green.

X

And cypress spire and stonepine dome,
And circling mountain look on and smile,
Saying, "Hitherward evermore seek your home,
When you traverse the furrows of fallow foam
That nourish with glory your Northern Isle,

XI

And from weightier cares than a Caesar's brain
Pondered of old, would crave release;
Wise Ruler whose long victorious Reign
Imposes on love-loyal land and main
The fetters of proud Imperial Peace."

CAREGGI.

A DREAM OF ENGLAND

I HAD a dream of England. Wild and weird,
The billows ravened round her, and the wrack,
Darkening and dwindling, blotted out the track,
Then flashed on her a bolt that scorched and seared.
She, writhing in her ruin, rolled, and reared,
Then headlonged unto doom, that drove her back
To welter on the waters, blind and black,
A homeless hulk, a derelict unsteered.
Wailing I woke, and through the dawn descried,
Throned on the waves that threatened to o'erwhelm,

The England of my dream resplendent ride,
And armoured Wisdom, sovran at the helm,
Through foaming furrows of the future guide
To wider empire a majestic Realm.

JOHN EVERETT MILLAIS

I

Now let no passing-bell be tolled,

Wail now no dirge of gloom ;

Nor around purple pall unfold

The trappings of the tomb !

Dead? No, the Artist doth not die ;

Enduring as the air, the sky,

He sees the mortal years roll by,

Indifferent to their doom.

II

With the abiding He abides,
Eternally the same ;
From shore to shore Time's sounding tides
Roll and repeat His name.
Death, the kind pilot, from His home
But speeds Him unto widening foam,
Then leaves Him, sunk from sight, to roam
The ocean of his Fame.

III

Nor thus himself alone He lives,
But, by the magic known
To His "so potent art," He gives
Life lasting as His own.
See, on the canvas, foiling Fate,
With kindling gaze and flashing gait,

Dead Statesmen still defend the State,
And vindicate the Throne.

IV

Stayed by His hand, the loved, the lost,
Still keep their wonted place ;
And, fondly fooled, our hearts accost
The vanished form and face.
Beauty, most frail of earthly shows,
That fades as fleetly as it blows,
By Him arrested, gleams and glows
With never-waning grace.

V

His, too, the wizard power to bring,
When city-pent we be,
The matron Autumn, maiden Spring,
Bracken and birchen-tree.

Look, 'twixt gray boulders fringed with fern,
The tawny torrents chafe and churn,
And, lined with light, the amber burn
Goes bounding to the sea.

VI

Toll then for Him no funeral knell,
Nor around aisle and nave
Let sorrow's farewell anthem swell,
Nor solemn symbols wave.
Your very brightest banners bring,
Your gayest flowers ! Sing, voices, sing !
And let Fame's lofty joybells ring
Their greeting at His grave !

A POINT OF HONOUR

I

“TELL me again ; I did not hear : It was wailing
so sadly. Nay,

Hush ! little one, for mother wants to know what
they have to say.

There ! At my breast be good and still ! What
quiets you calms me too.

They say that the source is poisoned ; still, it
seems pure enough for you !

II

“I shall bring them to shame, aye one and all,
my Father who loves me so,

Dear Mother, a little severe at times, but with story
as white as snow,
And sister Effie, so trim and quick, so fair and
betrothed so long,
Who will wait for her lover for years and years, but
would die at the thought of wrong.

III

“O don’t! For I know what my brother Ralph, if
he knew it, would think and say.
He would drive me across the lonely moor, and
would curse me all the way;
Would call on the cold wet winds to whip, and the
sunshine to pass me by,
And vow that the ditch were too good a grave for
a thing as foul as I.

IV

“ And then there is grand-dad, worn and white, who
can scarcely speak or see,

But sits in the sun in his wicker chair, with the
Bible upon his knee.

To him 'twould but sound like a buzzing hive if
they talked to him of my fall :

Yet I almost think that I dread his face, turned
heavenward, more than all.

V

“ We have never been either rich or poor, but a
proud, stiff yeoman stock.

And to think that I am the first to bring sin's scab
on a cleanly flock !

The pet lamb, too, as they call me still, the dearest
of all their dears !

I

Hush, little one ! But you well may wail, suckled
not upon milk, but tears.

VI

“He never will marry me now, that’s sure. Who
takes a wife with a stain ?

How we used to sit in the bluebell wood, and
roam through the primrose lane !

And I was thinking of some one else, while the
nightingale trilled above.

He alone, I think, will forgive me though, such a
wonderful thing is Love.

VII

“Do you think I do not foresee it all ?—a mother
and not a wife,

A babe but without a father still, and the lack and
the shame for life,

The nudge and the sidelong sneer, in church, at
market, year out, year in.

But what would you have me do to escape the
wages of my sin?

VIII

“Give up the child? To whom? To what? To
honest and kindly folk

Who have never a chit of their own and long for
a wee thing to kiss and stroke,

Who will call it their own, will rear as such, will
teach it to lisp and pray :

He will find the money for that and more. There
is nothing he will not pay.

IX

“Pay? Well, go on : I am listening hard, for the
little one’s now at rest.

Just look how it sucks and smiles in sleep on the
pillow of mother's breast.

Though I never thought—does Love ever think?—
that such was the end of all,

It is wicked, but still for a joy like this I would
almost repeat my fall.

X

“Yes, I understand. He has done his best. O,
you make it perfectly clear.

He is doing it all for me, no doubt ; *he* has nothing
to face or fear.

But 'tis strange that fathers with gold may pay for
their guilt, and can then forget,

And that lasting shame and a broken heart are
the share of the mother's debt.

XI

“ I have sometimes thought that Nature has against
woman some lasting pique,
For she makes us weak where we should be strong,
and strong where we might be weak,
Most good when a little badness pays, and bad
when 'tis safe being good.
To be always good, and nothing but good, 's the
one hope for womanhood.

XII

“ And I then should be good, or seem to be, which
is pretty well much the same,
Should hold up my head with the straightest then,
and be shocked at a sister's shame.

Be called by the Vicar his model maid, be kissed
by the Vicar's wife,
And may-be marry an honest man, and be happy
and loved for life.

XIII

"The hollyhocks now up the garden walk are
flowering strong and straight,
The bees are out in the mignonette, and the moss-
rose lingers late ;
The orchard reddens, the acorn cups are thick
'neath the pollard oak,
And up from the old red chimney-stack curls
the first blue Autumn smoke.

XIV

The kine from the lowland are trailing home, and
file betwixt shed and rick,

In the wide brown bowls on the dairy shelf the
cream lies smooth and thick ;

I can hear the geese in the farmyard pond, I can
see the neat new thatch.

Now what if I went there brave and bold, and took
courage to lift the latch ?

XV

“ They never would know, they would cluster round,
they would drag me in through the door,

Would fondle and cuddle, and hug and kiss, and
pull me down to the floor ;

And who should kiss first, and who kiss last, would
be all they would think of then ;

And at night we should all of us kneel and pray,
and I too should say, ‘ Amen ! ’

XVI

“They never would know; but *I* should know, and,
when they were all asleep,
I should lie awake through the long dark night,
and wonder, and sob, and weep,
Through the dear sweet bitter detested past would
my wavering fancy roam,
And at dawn I should learn to smile again, for at
least I should be at home.

XVII

“And where would *It* be? I must not ask—for
I’m to be strong and wise,—
If well or ailing, alive or dead, what colour its
hair and eyes,
Never knit a sock for its little feet, to the end
never know its name.

There's a shamelessness yet more shameful far
than the worst abyss of shame !

XVIII

“ Well, you see I am going. And where? Why,
home ! Yes, straight unto Father's door,
With this tell-tale thing in my warm weak arms,
right over the windy moor.
I shall tremble and stammer and halt, no doubt,
and look like a thing accurst,
And so double my fault by my helplessness ; and
then I shall know the worst.

XIX

“ If my Mother scolds, I will bow my head ; if my
sister shrinks, I will weep ;

If my brother smites, I will let him smite, for a
sin so dark and deep.

But what if my Father rises up, and drives from
the door,—what then?

Well, then I will go to the Father of all Who
pardoned Magdalen."

A FLORILEGIUM

I

ALL the seasons of the year,
I have flowers for you, dear.
When the ploughland's flecked with snow,
And the blue-eyed scyllas blow,
Gazing, through the wintry gale,
Like your eyes when you are pale ;
When in many a cloistered walk
Droop upon their modest stalk
Vestal snowdrops, one by one,
White as is a wimpled nun ;

When, as sleet away doth slip,
And the thawing gables drip,
The precocious crocus peers,—
Childlike, sunshine half, half tears,—
And from out the snug warm leaves
Silent housewife Winter weaves,
Scarlet windflowers, wide unfurled,
Dazzle an awakened world ;
These and more to you I bring,
Bold outriders of the Spring.

II

When along the Northern skies
Routed Winter shrieks and flies,
And again the mavis shrills,
Come the dauntless daffodils,

Laughing, as they sway and swing,
At rude March's blustering.
These I gather, and with these
Rosy-white anemones,
Like the coral-shells you wear
Sometimes in your hazel hair ;
Primroses loved none the less
For their wilding lavishness ;
Honeysuckle, like to you,
To what's near it clinging true ;
Violets, surprised in shade,
By their own sweet breath betrayed ;
Lagging hawthorn prized the more
That it long was waited for ;
These unto your bower I bring,
Gifts of Summer lent to Spring.

III

Which are loveliest, lilies dight
In their stateliness of white,
Safe against a touch too rude
By their cold proud maidenhood,
Or the unreserv'd rose,
Careless where it gads or goes,
So it be allowed to cling,
Rioting and revelling?
Rose and lily both I cull,
Iris scarce less beautiful,
Mignonette more sweet than myrrh,
Homely-smelling lavender,
Pinks and pansies, golden whin,
Constellated jessamine,

Bunches of the maiden's-bower,
Tufts of gaudy gillyflower,
Sprays of softening maidenhair ;
With my posy mount your stair
To the chamber where you sit,
Tenderly awaiting it.

IV

Then, when gorgeous Summer wanes,
Autumn woods and Winter lanes
Do I haunt, that I may dress
With their lingering loveliness
Nook and ingle where you be
Busy with your housewifery :
Ripened reedmace' barren sheaves,
Hardy hornbeam's russet leaves,

Jewels from the spindle-tree,
Coral-fruited briony,
Crimson haws and purple sloes,
Rubies that were once the rose,
Holly-berries warm in snow,
Amber-beaded misletoe,
Everything the waning year
Spares, that I may bring you, dear.

v

But should frost and rifling wind
Leave not even these behind,
And from out the leafless blast
I must come to you at last
Empty-handed, you would be
More than all the flowers to me.

IN PRAISE OF ENGLAND

I

FROM tangled brake and trellised bower

Bring every bud that blows,

But never will you find the flower

To match an English rose.

It blooms with more than city grace,

Though rustic and apart ;

It has a smile upon its face,

And a dewdrop in its heart.

K

II

Though wide the goodly world around
Your fancy may have strayed,
Where was the woman ever found
To match an English maid?
At work she smiles, through play she sings,
She doubts not nor denies ;
She'll cling to you as woodbine clings,
And love you till she dies.

III

If you would put it to the proof,
Then round the zodiac roam ;
But never will you find the roof
To match an English home.
You hear the sound of children's feet
Still pattering on the stair :

'Tis made by loving labour sweet,
And sanctified by prayer.

IV

Go traverse tracts sublime or sweet,
Snow-peak or scorched ravine,
But where will you the landscape meet
To match an English scene?
The hamlet hallowed by its spire,
The wildwood fresh with flowers,
Garden and croft and thorp and byre
Gleaming through silvery showers.

V

Across the wave, along the wind,
Flutter and plough your way,

But where will you a Sceptre find

To match the English Sway ?

Its conscience holds the world in awe

With blessing or with ban ;

Its Freedom guards the Reign of Law,

And majesty of Man !

BURNS'S STATUE AT IRVINE

I

YES ! let His place be there !

Where the lone moorland gazes on the sea,
Not in the squalid street nor pompous square :

So that he again may be

From contamination free,

His pedestal the plain, his canopy the air !

II

There leave him all alone !

Too much, too long, he herded with his kind,

Lured by the frolic phantoms that dethrone
Honest heart and homely mind,
Phantoms that besot and blind,
Then leave the troubled soul to suffer and atone.

III

From city stain and broil
Hither his rustic memory reclaim,
Leading him back, strayed suckling of the soil,
Homeward, that forgiving Fame
May around his shriven name
A halo wind, shall Time nor Truth itself despoil.

IV

Quickly the Poet learns
The little that the alien world can teach.
Then he, if wise, to solitude returns,

Communing on brae and beach
With old Ocean's rhythmic speech,
Message of wandering winds, or lore of mountain
burns.

v

'Tis there that Nature fills
His brooding heart with all he needs to know,
Moan of the main, and rapture of the rills ;
So that, whether joy or woe
Fire his verse, it still may glow
Clear as her heaven-fed streams, and soaring as her
hills.

P. VERGILI MARONIS GEORGICON LIB. II. 458-538

O FORTUNATOS nimium, sua si bona norint,
Agrícolas, quibus ipsa procul discordibus armis
Fundit humo facilem victum iustissima tellus !
Si non ingentem foribus domus alta superbis
Mane salutantum totis vomit aedibus undam,
Nec varios inhiant pulchra testudine postes,
Inlusasque auro vestes Ephyreïaque aera,
Alba neque Assyrio fucatur lana veneno,
Nec casia liquidi corrumpitur usus olivi ;
At segura quies et nescia fallere vita,
Dives opum variarum, at latis otia fundis,

AN EXPERIMENT IN TRANSLATION

BLEST husbandmen ! if they but knew their bliss !

For whom, from war remote, fair-minded Earth

Teems, to light toil, with ready sustenance.

What though from splendid palace streams at dawn

No servile train, gaping at inlaid gates,

Corinthian bronzes, garments tricked with gold ;

What though for them no snow-white wool be stained

By Eastern dyes, nor oil be smeared with nard,

Secure tranquillity is theirs, a life

Of rural wealth, from galling failure free,

Of ample leisure amid broad domains,

Speluncae, vivique lacus, et frigida Tempe,
Mugitusque boum, mollesque sub arbore somni
Non absunt ; illic saltus ac lustra ferarum,
Et patiens operum exiguoque adsueta iuventus,
Sacra deum, sanctique patres ; extrema per illos
Iustitia excedens terris vestigia fecit.

Me vero primum dulces ante omnia Musae,
Quarum sacra fero ingenti percussus amore,
Accipiant, caelique vias et sidera monstrent,
Defectus solis varios lunaeque labores ;
Unde tremor terris, qua vi maria alta tumescant
Obicibus ruptis rursusque in se ipsa residant,
Quid tantum Oceano properent se tingere soles
Hiberni, vel quae tardis mora noctibus obstet.
Sin, has ne possim naturae accedere partes,
Frigidus obstiterit circum praecordia sanguis,

Cool grotts, and shimmering pools, and shady groves,
Lowing of kine, and, after woodland chase,
Delight of slumber under noonday boughs :
Hard-working hinds to homely fare inured,
Fear of the Gods, and reverence for age.
Justice, deserting Earth, forsook them last.

For me, enamoured of the darling Muse,
Whose badge I bear, may she to me reveal
The secret of the stars, the sun's eclipse,
Moon's endless labour, earthquake, storm, and calm,
Why winter suns subside into the sea
So soon, and summer twilights stay so long.
But if not mine the native fire and force
To find my way to Nature's very heart,
Leave me green vales and irrigating rills,
And soothe my lack of fame with woods and streams.

Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes,
Flumina amem silvasque inglorius. O ubi campi
Spercheosque et virginibus bacchata Lacaenis
Taÿgeta, o qui me gelidis convallibus Haemi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra?
Felix, qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas,
Atque metus omnes et inexorabile fatum
Subiecit pedibus strepitumque Acherontis avari.
Fortunatus et ille, deos qui novit agrestes,
Panaque Silvanumque senem Nymphasque sorores.
Illum non populi fasces, non purpura regum
Flexit et infidos agitans discordia fratres,
Aut coniurato descendens Dacus ab Histro,
Non res Romanae perituraque regna : neque ille
Aut doluit miserans inopem aut invidit habenti.
Quos rami fructus, quos ipsa voluntia rura
Sponte tulere sua, carpsit, nec ferrea iura

Where are the braes and burns of Thessaly,
And Spartan maidens wantoning in the woods !
O who will hence now wizard me away
To Haemus' dewy dingles, and with dense
Umbrageous branches curtain my retreat !
Thrice blest indeed is he that apprehends
The root and real significance of things,
Who tramples under foot both fear and fate,
Nor dreads the roar of Acheron's yawning surge.
Nor happy less, who knows the rustic gods,
Pan, old Sylvanus, and the sister nymphs.
To menace of the mob or regal frown,
To Dacian hosts and fratricidal strife,
Future of Rome, and perishable realms,
Insensible alike, his heart is spared
Pain for the poor and envy of the rich.
His wealth the harvest trunk and furrow yield,

Insanumque forum aut populi tabularia vidit.
Sollicitant alii remis freta caeca, ruuntque
In ferrum, penetrant aulas et limina regum ;
Hic petit excidiis urbem miserosque Penates,
Ut gemma bibat et Sarrano dormiat ostro ;
Condit opes alius defossoque incubat auro ;
Hic stupet attonitus rostris ; hunc plausus hiantem
Per cuneos geminatus enim plebisque patrumque
Corripuit ; gaudent perfusi sanguine fratrum,
Exilioque domos et dulcia limina mutant
Atque alio patriam quaerunt sub sole iacentem.
Agricola incurvo terram dimovit aratro :
Hinc anni labor, hinc patriam parvosque nepotes
Sustinet, hinc armenta boum meritosque iuvencos.
Nec requies, quin aut pomis exuberet annus
Aut fetu pecorum aut Cerealis mergite culmi,
Proventuque oneret sulcos atque horrea vincat.

Nothing he recks of edicts cast in bronze,
News of the hour, or Senate's wrangling strife.
Some scour the seas in search of war, and storm
The gates of Kings, put cities to the sword,
To drain gemmed goblets, snore in Tyrian sheets ;
Some gloat upon their golden hoards, while some
Are dazed by sounding rhetoric or befooled
By cheers repeated from patrician lips
And plebs alike ; exult in brother's blood ;
Or in sheer lust of exile quit their home
To seek a roof beneath some other sky.
With his curved share the wise swain stirs the soil,
Source of his constant care, and sustenance
Of country, kin, sleek kine, and generous steers.
Respite is none ; for still the season teems
With fruits, or lambing flocks ; or mellow sheaves
Crest the long furrows, and restock the barns.

Venit hiemps : teritur Sicyonia baca trapetis,
Glande sues laeti redeunt, dant arbuta
silvae ;

Et varios ponit fetus autumnus, et alte
Mitis in apricis coquitur vindemia saxis.
Interea dulces pendent circum oscula nati,
Casta pudicitiam servat domus, ubera vaccae
Lactea demittunt, pinguesque in gramine laeto
Inter se adversis luctantur cornibus haedi.
Ipse dies agitat festos fususque per herbam,
Ignis ubi in medio et socii cratera coronant,
Te libans, Lenaeae, vocat, pecorisque magistris
Velocis iaculi certamina ponit in ulmo,
Corporaque agresti nudant praedura palaestrae.
Hanc olim veteres vitam coluere Sabini,
Hanc Remus et frater, sic fortis Etruria crevit
Scilicet et rerum facta est pulcherrima Roma,

Then Winter comes ; the olives must be pressed,
The hogs grunt homeward gorged with mast ; the
grove

Yields arbutus, the Autumn peach and pear,
And the grapes ripen on the warm dry soil.
Meanwhile his children clamber to be kissed,
His honour lives unstained, the foaming pail
Brims with abounding milk, and on the sward
Young kids do mimic battle with their horns.
'Tis he that leads the Feast ; and when his folk
Have lit the altar-fire and wreathed the cup,
Thee, Bacchus, with libation he invokes, and then
Tests at the target his head-shepherds' skill,
Or bids them strip and wrestle for the prize.
Such was the life the Sabines led of old,
Such Remus and his twin ; and thus it was
Etruria throve ; thus seven-hilled Rome became

Septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces.

Ante etiam sceptrum Dictaei regis et ante

Inpia quam caesis gens est epulata iuencis,

Aureus hanc vitam in terris Saturnus agebat.

One with itself, the glory of the world.
Such, too, ere yet unnatural Minos reigned,
And impious mortals banqueted on flesh,
The simple manners of the Golden Age.

THE SILENT MUSE

I

“WHY have you silent been so long?”

In tones of mild rebuke you ask.

Know you not, kindly friend, that Song

Is the “Gay Science,” not a task?

II

It is but when it pleaseth God

The blackthorn blows, the acorns fall;

The Muse ignores a mortal's nod,

And will not come to beck and call.

III

If I, to catch the ear of men,
Should go on singing day by day,
What other, better, were I then,
Than screeching chough or scolding jay?

IV

But save the unseen source be stirred,
The happy numbers will not flow :
Then one is like a songless bird
That crouches in the drifted snow.

V

Say, did you ever sit and dream,
When summer clouds are white and still,
Beside a slow unsounding stream
That winds below some rustic mill?

VI

The languid current scarcely moves ;
At times you almost doubt it flows ;
Loitering in shallow sandy grooves,
It makes no music as it goes.

VII

The sluice is down, the mill-race still,
Nor in mid-stream nor water's edge
Comes faintest ripple, tiniest rill,
To stir the flag, or sway the sedge.

VIII

Beside the dozing stream you doze,
For nothing wakes in air or sky :
It feels as if Time's eyelids close,
And 'tis the same to live or die ;

IX

To be a passive part of all
That rounds Heaven's universal plan,
Of things that soar, of things that crawl,
Of mindless matter, as of man.

X

When slowly through the noonday sleep
A phantom something seems to stir,
Like waves of dewy light that creep
Along gray chords of gossamer.

XI

At first it is nor sight nor sound,
But feeling only, inward sense
Of motion slowly rising round,
You know not where, you know not whence.

XII

Then, noiseless still, but plain to see,
The languid waters wake and wind ;
The wave before now fears to be
O'ertaken by the wave behind.

XIII

The race, long pent, from out the mill
Comes rushing, rippling, gleam on gleam ;
The runnels rise, the shallows fill,
And deep and happy flows the stream.

XIV

The lazy sedges sway and swerve,
The reedmace rocks its heavy head ;
Past many a bend, and bay, and curve,
The river revels through its bed.

XV

And as it twists, and curls, and swells,
From out its leaping heart there come
Sounds sweet as far-off village bells,
Or swarming bee-hive's honeyed hum.

XVI

Through quaking grass and waving weed
Rises and falls the river-theme ;
Vibrating rush and trembling reed
Are but the harpstrings of the stream.

XVII

Once more the gold-ribbed gravel trills
With quavering trebles clear and cool,
Blent with the deeper note that fills
The plunging weir and swirling pool.

XVIII

Bed, bank and channel, chant and chime,
And fall and freshet, as they run,
Though ignorant of tune and time,
Sing in melodious unison.

XIX

And so, if I be shaped to sing
What kindly hearts are pleased to hear,
And blissful were did Nature bring
A rush of music all the year ;

XX

Seasons there are it doth not flow,
When Fancy's freshets will not come,
The springs of song seem shrunk and low,
And all my being dry and dumb.

XXI

When suddenly from far-off source,
Unseen, unsounding, deep, immense,
Something, with swift resistless force,
Flushes the heart and floods the sense ;

XXII

And as though Heaven and Earth did drain
Into that deep mysterious spring,
Brims all the windings of the brain ;
Then like replenished stream I sing.

XXIII

The will can not the stream control,
Its currents are divinely sent,
And thought and feeling, mind and soul,
Are rapt in rhythmic ravishment.

XXIV

And on they flow, when once they start,
To some ordained but unguessed goal,
Through all the channels of the heart,
And all the reaches of the soul.

XXV

Then come the winged words that skim
The surface of earth's discontent
To soar up to the ether dim,
Faint heard from far-off firmament.

XXVI

But, till the music stirs and swells
Within my breast, forbearing be ;
Nor lightly waken slumbering bells
Above a silent sanctuary !

A PORTRAIT

WHEN friends grown faithless, or the fickle throng,
Withdrawing from my life the love they lent,
Breed in my heart disdainful discontent,
And sadden sunshine with a sense of wrong,
Then I, forgetting to be wise and strong,
And on my own endearment too intent,
Unto myself make musical lament,
And lullaby my pain with plaintive song.
But, when I gaze upon this face august,
Her gift, who, seated on earth's loftiest throne,

For others' weal holds half the world in trust,
Pondering on cares of Empire all alone,
I, then rebuked, remember to be just,
Think of her griefs, and quite forget my own.

1893.

THE END



Printed by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, Edinburgh.

THE WORKS OF
ALFRED AUSTIN,
POET LAUREATE.

A New Collected Edition of Poems, in seven vols.
Crown 8vo. 5s. each.

- I. THE TOWER OF BABEL. A Celestial Love
Drama.
- II. SAVONAROLA : A Tragedy.
- III. PRINCE LUCIFER.
- IV. THE HUMAN TRAGEDY.
- V. LYRICAL POEMS.
- VI. NARRATIVE POEMS.
- VII. FORTUNATUS THE PESSIMIST.

ENGLAND'S DARLING. Third Edition. Crown 8vo.
6s.

MADONNA'S CHILD. New Edition. Fcap. 8vo.
2s. 6d. net.

THE SEASON : A Satire. Third Edition. Crown
8vo. 5s.

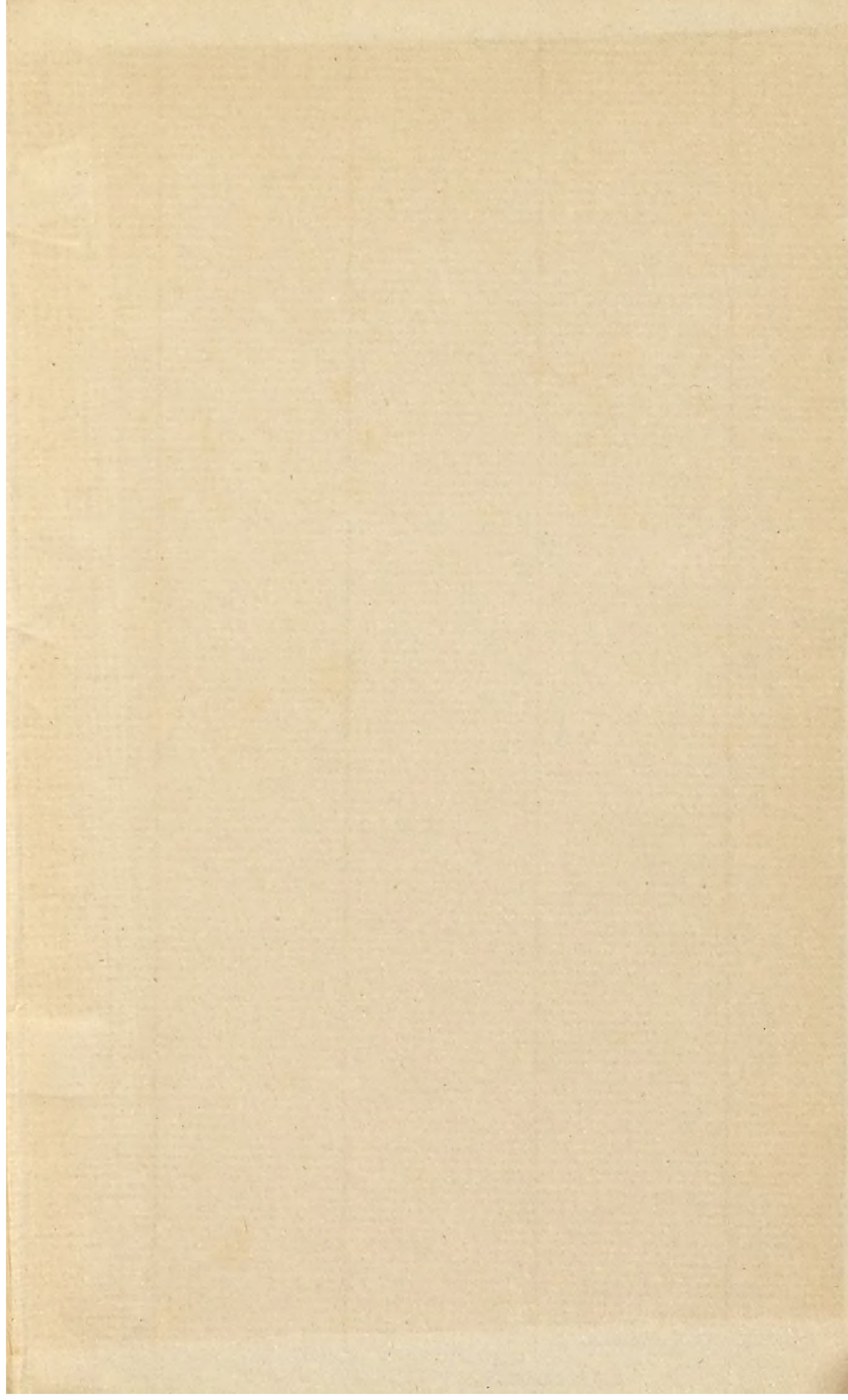
THE GARDEN THAT I LOVE. With Illustrations.
Seventh Thousand. Extra Crown 8vo. 9s.

IN VERONICA'S GARDEN. With Illustrations. Fourth
Thousand. Extra Crown 8vo. 9s.

ENGLISH LYRICS. Fourth Edition. Crown 8vo.
3s. 6d.

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD., LONDON.

6.-



Austin, Alfred

The Conversion of Winckelmann and other poems

London 1897

P.o.angl. 19 eb

urn:nbn:de:bvb:12-bsb11817406-5